1 The Paper
The philosophy of mind is concerned with metaphysical and epistemological issues which arise in reflecting on the mind. You will also find the Philosophy of Psychology section of this Guide useful, and various parts of the Logic and Metaphysics, and Epistemology and Methodology sections.

2 Basic Reading
A. INTRODUCTORY TEXTS
There are many introductions to the philosophy of mind currently available. The following three are reliable and useful:


B. ANTHOLOGIES
Some basic anthologies. These collections contain quite a lot of the required reading.


Block, N. ed. 1980-81. *Readings in the Philosophy of Psychology*, 2 vols. London: Methuen. The first volume contains many central papers on the metaphysics of mind. The papers in the second volume are more concerned with issues in the philosophy of psychology, such as mental imagery and the language of thought. Still very useful.

Lycan, W. ed. 1990. *Mind and Cognition: a Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. This anthology contains some papers on the metaphysics of mind, but most of it is concerned with issues about mental representation, mental processing and folk psychology.


More specialised collections


3 Topics
The questions on this course can be broadly divided into three kinds.
(a) The metaphysics of mind: questions about dualism, physicalism, functionalism, mental causation and so on.
(b) The epistemology of mind: how do we know about our own minds? How do we know about the minds of others?
(c) Mental phenomena: questions about (for example) consciousness, intentionality, action, self-deception, weakness of will, perception and memory (for which see also the entries under Epistemology & Methodology).

N.B. In the reading lists which follow
Items marked PP are in N. Block, ed. *Readings in the Philosophy of Psychology*, 2 Vols.
Items marked MC are in W. Lycan, ed. *Mind and Cognition*.
Items marked NM are in D. Rosenthal, ed. *The Nature of Mind*. 
A. THE METAPHYSICS OF MIND
i. Physicalism/Materialism
Physicalism says that reality is physical. So if the mind exists, it must be physical. There are broadly two sorts of physicalist view of the mind:
(i) The first claims that mental items are identical with physical items. Such identity theories come in two kinds: ‘type’ identity theories those which claim that mental properties (types) are physical properties (types) and token identity theories those that claim that mental particulars (events, objects: ‘tokens’) are identical with physical particulars.
(ii) The second kind of physicalism claims that mental items—events, states, properties, property instances, facts or objects—are realised by, constituted out of, or ontologically dependent or supervenient upon physical items.

On type identity theory
For statements of the theory see

One question for the type identity theory is whether it can accommodate the apparent fact that mental states are variably or multiply ‘realisable’ in creatures with different physical natures.

On token identity theory

On physicalism and subjectivity
A central objection to physicalism of any form is whether it can account for the subjective nature of experience.

On supervenience
There are various versions of the claim that the mental supervenes on the physical (‘no mental difference without a physical difference’). Supervenience is often claimed to be the most non-committal form of physicalism.


See Logic & Metaphysics for further reading.

**Eliminative materialism**

Eliminative materialists claim that the commonsense theory we use to attribute mental states to others is false, and that therefore the entities it talks about do not exist.


**On the issue of physicalism in general**

What is the problem to which physicalism is supposed to be a solution? Is the issue of physicalism clearly formulated?


**ii. Dualism**

Traditionally dualists have claimed that mental substances are distinct from physical or material substances. Some philosophers also talk about property dualism.


See Logic & Metaphysics for further reading.

**iii. Functionalism**

Functionalism is the view that mental states (types/properties) are individuated by their causal roles: that is, their characteristic patterns of relations to their inputs (e.g. perceptions), their outputs (e.g. actions) and other mental states. There are various kinds of functionalism: for example, some versions of functionalism take the position to be recommended by common sense (Lewis), others as its being a product of scientific psychology. Functionalists also differ about whether mental states are to be seen as identical with functional states or rather with what realises such states.

Block, N. ‘What is Functionalism?’, in PP Vol.I.


One of the main threats facing functionalism is whether it can account for the qualitative character of mental states.

Block, N. ‘Troubles with Functionalism’, in PP and MC.


iv. Causal theories of mind

Many accounts of the mind treat mental concepts as causal concepts. There is a common pattern in the arguments offered in the case of each mental phenomenon, and a common problem of ‘deviant causal chains’.


Peacocke, C. 1979. Holistic Explanation, Ch.2.


v. Mental causation

Do states of mind have effects in the physical world? If so, how is this compatible with a physicalist or a naturalistic world view? Some see this as a special problem for Davidson’s Anomalous Monism; others see a problem for physicalism in general.


B. EPISTEMOLOGY OF MIND

i. The Problem of Other Minds

Do we know that others have minds as we do? Can we know how alike the minds of others are to us? Traditionally this has been conceived as a sceptical problem about our knowledge of minds, or even our ability to conceive of there being minds other than our own. This topic has now become one of more specific interest within developmental psychology, with the question: how and when do we acquire or apply mental concepts? For this topic see the section immediately below.


ii. Theory versus simulation

What is it to attribute mental states to others? Some philosophers say that it is a matter of applying a theory,
commonsense or ‘folk’ psychology. (This is sometimes known as the ‘theory theory’.) Others say that it is
a matter of a kind of imaginative projection into others’ minds, which they call ‘simulation’ or
‘replication’. A simple introduction to the issue can be found in T. Crane. 1995. The Mechanical Mind: a
For the ‘theory theory’
Sellars, W. 1997. Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind, with an introduction by Richard Rorty, and a study guide by
influential starting point of the debate.
Sellers; an abridged version is in NM.
Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987; and in MC and NM.
The simulation approach is defended by
See also
Mind and Language, special issue 1992: Mental Simulation, reprinted in modified form in the following two volumes:
——. 1995. Mental Simulation: Evaluations and Applications. Oxford: Blackwell. These contain important papers both
by philosophers and psychologists.
Peacocke, C. ed. 1996. Objectivity, Simulation and the Unity of Consciousness: Current Issues in the Philosophy of
University Press. See the essays by J. Heal and M. Davies.
Smith, P., and P. Carruthers, eds. 1996. Theories of Theories of Mind. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. This
is an interdisciplinary volume, with contributions by both philosophers and psychologists.

iii. Introspection and First Person Authority.
How do we know what we think? What is it to introspect our own mental states? Do we have some form of
special inner observation, do we infer it from our own behaviour, or is there no special way of knowing at all?
We seem to have a kind of authority (‘first person authority’) about the contents of our own minds.
What is this authority? (See also the entry under externalism and self-knowledge below.)
excellent anthology which contains most of the essential reading.
Descartes, R. Meditations. Second meditation.
308, §§412-427.
Cassam.
the Philosophy of Mind. Midwest Studies in Philosophy 10. Reprinted in his First Person Perspective and Other
Essays. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; and in Cassam.
Perspectives 3. Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview. Reprinted in his First Person Perspective and Other Essays.
——. 1987. ‘Knowing One’s Own Mind’, Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association 60:
Cassam.
C. MENTAL PHENOMENA

i. Consciousness and experience

Consciousness has traditionally been considered the mark of the mental. But what exactly is consciousness? Is there a univocal notion of consciousness, or is the notion of consciousness applied to experience different from the notion applied to thought? Can there be a unified theory of consciousness? Some doubt whether there can be a theory of consciousness at all, on account of its ineffability. A good general collection is *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates*, eds., N. Block, O. Flanagan & G. Güzeldere. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997.

The conscious and the unconscious

What is the link between consciousness and mentality? How should consciousness in general be understood? How should we understand the notion of an unconscious mental state?


Phenomenal consciousness and qualia

Some argue that consciousness involves being aware of ineffable, non-intentional properties, known as ‘qualia’. Others doubt whether there are such properties. (See also Physicalism/Materialism, above.)


Bodily sensations

What is it to be aware of the states of one’s own body? Is bodily awareness simply a kind of perception?


Perceptual content

Many contemporary writers claim that experiences involve intentional content in something like the way beliefs and other intentional states do (see Intentionality, below). If this is so, then how should perception be distinguished from belief?

Imagery

What is it to form a mental image of something? Some claim that images have the structure of pictures, others that they are structured like sentences. What does this distinction amount to? How does it relate to the phenomenology of mental imagery?

For some classic readings, see the relevant section of PP Vol. II. See also

Block, N. ‘Mental Pictures and Cognitive Science’, in MC.
Sterelny, K. ‘The Imagery Debate’, in MC.

ii. Intentionality

Many mental states, like beliefs, desires and hopes, are ‘directed’ upon, or about, things in the world. ‘Intentionality’ is a technical term for the directedness or ‘aboutness’ of these states of mind. There are many problems which such intentionality states pose for philosophy of mind.

The nature of intentionality

Are all mental phenomena intentional? Is intentionality the ‘mark’ of the mental? How should intentionality be characterised? Is it a relation? But one can think about something that does not exist, so to what is one related in this case? What is the relation between intentionality and the logical notion of intensionality?


Intentionality and propositional attitudes

Many intentional states are usefully characterised as attitudes to propositions. Can all intentionality be characterised in this way? (See Emotion, below) Can the different types of attitude be distinguished in terms of ‘direction of fit’?


The reduction of intentionality

Many physicalists think that intentionality must be explained in wholly non-intentional and non-mental terms. A central problem for these explanations is how to account for misrepresentation.


Further reading


Further reading


Object-dependent thought

One variety of externalism holds that certain thoughts cannot be had unless the objects they concern actually exist. Internalists object that this thesis leaves unexplained certain features of the role of thought in the explanation of action.


iii. Emotion

How should a theory of mind explain emotions? Are they akin to cognitive states, like beliefs? What is the relation between kinds of emotion and the feelings or sensations associated with them? Should we appeal to psychoanalytical or psychological theories of the mind to explain emotion?


iv. Action and intention

There are three main groups of issues in the study of action. The first is whether actions are caused by the mental states which rationalise them. The second is about the relation between trying and acting. The third is about the special relations which agents bear to their own actions. Intention, a closely related topic, is also a subject of interest in its own right. A useful collection here is A. Mele, ed., The Philosophy of Action. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Causation and action


Agency

Is human action to be characterised, like animal action, as a product of motivations? Or is it to be explained in terms of a distinctive practical rationality? Does human action need to appeal to a special kind of causation, agent-causation, in order to accommodate free will or the special role of their agent in their actions?


The ontology of action

What are the relations between trying and action, and the bodily movements it involves? Is bodily movement essential to action?


Davidson, D. ‘Agency’, in his *Essays on Actions and Events*.

Intention

Are intentions a distinctive kind of mental state, or can they be fully explained in terms of beliefs and desires?


v. Irrationality: self-deception and weakness of will

The phenomenon of self-deception seems common enough. Yet surely I must know something in order to hide it from someone. How then can I hide it from or deceive myself? Connected to this is the problem of weakness of will (or akrasia): how is it possible that I rightly take my reasons for action to favour one course of action but chose another?


Davidson, D. ‘How is Weakness of the Will Possible?’, in *Essays on Actions and Events*.


See also

Entries under Mind and Nature in Logic & Metaphysics; Perception and Memory in Epistemology & Methodology; and the entries under Cognitive Psychology and Philosophy of Psychoanalysis in Philosophy of Psychology.